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## **Editorial**

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## Editorial

The 20th century has seen an unprecedented rise in the status of psychotherapy as an effective treatment for the majority of mental disorders. Over the decades, something previously regarded as far outside scientific standards has developed into a discipline based on sound scientific principles. Today, psychotherapy can be seen as one of the most powerful therapeutic approaches in medicine.

This development was accompanied by the emergence of regional, national and international professional membership societies which helped push the field forward. The International Federation for Psychotherapy (IFP) was among the first worldwide umbrella associations. In 1934, in Germany, Ernst Kretschmer proposed that the Allgemeine ärztliche Gesellschaft für Psychotherapie of Germany be transformed into the International General Medical Society for Psychotherapy (IGMSP). Carl Gustav Jung was appointed to serve as the IGMSP's first President. After World War II, under the guidance of Medard Boss, the society was re-established under the name 'International Federation for Medical Psychotherapy'. The Federation was again renamed in 1991 to 'International Federation for Psychotherapy'.

The IFP has always seen psychotherapy as a culturally sensitive and scientifically based discipline (which must not necessarily preclude us from seeing psychotherapy as an art as well), meaning that advancement of psychotherapeutic practice should go hand in hand with innovations in psychotherapy research. Clinicians should learn from

researchers about the efficacy and effectiveness (or lack thereof) as well as about adverse side effects of specific psychotherapeutic approaches or techniques. Conversely, researchers should listen to clinicians in order to generate clinically relevant and meaningful research questions and hypotheses. Today, meaningful exchange between clinicians and researchers alongside a culturally sensitive approach to psychotherapy are the basic principles of the IFP's mission statement.

In 2002, the Executive Board of the IFP realized that there is no written history of the Federation, in spite of the fact that it is one of the oldest umbrella organizations for psychotherapy professionals, both clinicians and researchers. Memories of key times and events were scattered among long-standing members of the Board and Council, yet there was no coherent narrative of the Federation. Therefore, in 2002, board member Alfried Längle suggested creating a task force to write up the history of IFP. We started by approaching all living past presidents to write about their presidential terms. Pierre-Bernard Schneider, Finn Magnussen, Edgar Heim and Wolfgang Senf produced short pieces of text which were published in the IFP Newsletter. Arthur Trenkel, who had served the IFP as treasurer for 15 years, made a substantial contribution as well.

In 2003, IFP past president and honorary member Edgar Heim, who had served as president of the IFP from 1988 to 1998, was officially mandated by the IFP Board to write up the history of the IFP. He collected minutes of

board meetings, correspondence between members, congress proceedings and other historical documents related to the IFP. What emerged over the years is far more than just the history of the IFP: it is a compelling account of the development of psychotherapy, with a special emphasis on organizational aspects of the development during the 20th century.

I am extremely pleased to see Edgar Heim's work coming to fruition. Thanks to his wealth of knowledge, derived from over 50 years' professional experience in the field, and his remarkable persistence for over 6 years, readers are now able to enjoy an extremely informative and valuable piece of text on psychotherapy and its professional organizations.

*Ulrich Schnyder*